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Ben: Hello there, young students. Welcome to IELTS Podcast. You no longer have to worry, fret, or panic about IELTS because we are here to guide you through this test of jungle. Enjoy these IELTS tutorials.

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INTRODUCTION

Ellen: Hi there, IELTS Podcast listeners. My name is Ellen and I want to welcome you to today's tutorial. Today's tutorial is about IELTS writing which you may have figured out from a lot of my other tutorials it's probably my favorite part of the test. I know it's usually the part that most people dislike, but it actually is my favorite part of the test and what we're going to talk about today is how to use your time wisely in the writing test specifically in the Academic test and I



say that because as you know, the Task 1 is different and so some of the tips and tricks that we're going to talk about today really just apply to Academic writing and not to General.

So, a lot of people come to me and they say Ellen, I'm running out of time. I don't know what to do. I get nervous etc., etc., etc. Well and I understand that. An hour to write two pieces of writing is not a lot, but with some of the tips we're going to talk about today, we're going to help you overcome that.

Also, there is no-- how can I say this-- no kind of magic solution. You will have to do some work on your own to get up to speed, but I think that with some of the tips that we're going to talk about today, this will become much, much easier, all right? But again, some of that work is going to have to come from you because getting a good speed is a matter of practice. It does take practice. So, that's kind of the bad news in this. It's not really bad news, but it's going to require some practice from you.



But first before we get into that, why don't we talk about some of the tips. Remember that IELTS is a language test, but it also is testing test-taking skills and so part of having good test-taking skills is going into the test with a good strategy and so that's what we're going to be looking at today.

So, the first tip that I have for you is-- maybe it's a little counter-intuitive, but my first suggestion is to always start with Task 2. I know it seems strange. Usually people go straight into Task 1 and then they go into Task 2, but there are a handful of reasons why I suggest this. The first reason is that you really must remember that Task 2 is worth twice as much as Task 1 and so it deserves more time basically.

Now, what I have found happening to some students in the past is that they kind of lose track of time when they start with Task 1 and all of a sudden when they're finished with Task 1, they realize oh, my goodness. I have 30 minutes or I have 25 minutes left for Task 2. You don't want



to do that. You absolutely do not want to rush Task 2. So, give it the time it deserves so that you can get the score you deserve and start with Task 2.

Now, there is another practical reason why I suggest starting with Task 2. Let's imagine that you didn't. Let's imagine instead that you started with Task 1. You then go to your Task 2 and then you run out of time before either finishing your conclusion or maybe they take the test paper away from you while you're mid-sentence. This is the last thing you want to happen because if there's anything missing, anything that looks like it's not a completed essay, this is going to count against your coherence and cohesion score.

So, if you're missing a conclusion, if your conclusion is only half done and it doesn't feel like a completed conclusion, or if you stop mid-sentence anywhere either in your body paragraph or in the conclusion, you cannot get higher than a band 5 for coherence and cohesion. And wouldn't that be just such a shame? That would be terrible. So, make sure that you start with Task 2 so that you are absolutely certain you have finished your essay. So, that's the first thing.



Now, so let's assume that you take your Task 2 writing booklet. It's like a folded sheet basically. So, let's assume that you take that and you have your answer sheet and a lot of people just go whoosh straight into the writing. They read the prompt and then they just fly into the essay. Well, I think that is a huge mistake and what I have found in my years of involvement with IELTS is that people being in such a rush really fail to understand the question.

And I think I've said this like a million times both in podcasts and in essay corrections. It is absolutely in your interest-- in your best interest to spend time reading and understanding the question. I would even go so far as to say maybe even spend like 3-4 minutes on it. I mean don't just like stare at it and read it over and over again, but underline some of those key words.

Make sure you understand the context because usually, that first sentence in the prompt gives you a context for what the essay is going to talk about and then the next sentence really kind of lays out the dilemma, the controversy, or the debate in question and then the third sentence usually is what I call the command where they tell you what they want from you. Do they want



to know what extent you agree or disagree? Do they want you to discuss both sides and give your opinion?

So, it's really important to underline, highlight, circle, whatever those key words. So, understanding both the context and then what it is really that they want from you. What aspect of that context is important? And so this takes time. You can't just read it once through and then go straight into writing. That would be a terrible idea. You really need to make sure to understand fully and like I said, underline some of those keywords.

Like there's one essay I remember really, really, really vividly in my mind. It was something like people say that punishment is the best way to discipline a child, all right? That was the context sentence. So, the key word here is the best way. So, obviously we're talking about punishment. We're talking about discipline, but we're saying punishment is the best way.

The best way is a really important word here because they're not saying it's the only way. They're not saying it's a good way, but it's very extreme. They're saying it's the best way. And so a really



well developed essay is going to pick up on that and look at the nuance of that. So, is it truly the best way?

So, when you write your notes, this is the kind of the guiding idea that you want to keep in mind. You're not going to be able to come up with this and you're not going to be able to really kind of-- well, I shouldn't say you're not going to, but it's more difficult if you just give it a once through and then go into writing which is why I say it's really important to spend some time reading the question, underlining those important elements to make sure that your answer addresses all of them.

So, in this example that would be punishment, best way, and discipline. There was more to the question. I'm not going to tire you with that, but okay. So, that's one key here; to spend time reading the question.

Now, the next thing you want to do after you've understood the question is again, not go straight into writing but spending some time jotting down your notes. I absolutely 100% insist that you



write notes. I can tell you from personal experience just kind of going in straight writing without notes midway through, I would forget something, one of the important points that I wanted to mention or all of a sudden, I'd be like hey, let me write this in that next paragraph. I just had a great idea and then when I got to the next paragraph, I completely forgot what my great idea was.

So, this is also-- it's just not a good idea. So, spend some time-- no more than five minutes-- writing down some notes, not full sentences, not full paragraphs but notes. So, what should your notes include? They should include your main ideas. So, just the main thoughts like a little phrase for your main ideas and then how you're going to support those main ideas.

So great. You've got the main idea, but then what's the why? What's the how? How do you explain what your idea is? How do you support what your idea is? So, those are the little expressions, keywords, vocabulary words that you want to write down and you're allowed to write down on that booklet. That's yours. You can make notes on it, so it's fine. So, absolutely make sure you do that.



So, basically what we're talking about is before you even write anything on your answer sheet to spend maybe a maximum-- I know it might sound crazy, but maybe even like 7-8 minutes on this. So, between reading the task and understanding it and jotting down your notes because you're also going to do it kind of simultaneously because as you're writing down your notes, you do need to refer back to the task to say okay, this is my idea, but is it in fact in line with the prompt and the question what they're asking me?

You do need to check yourself while you're taking down your notes to make absolutely sure that you've understood the question and that your answer responds to the question and not something kind of related. And so that's why I cannot emphasize enough how important it is to spend this time doing this work before you even write.

So, the next suggestion here on how to use your time and this is where I said in the beginning that you're going to need to do some work before you actually take the exam is use a template. Use a template. Have basically a skeleton in your mind for the various essay types and you can



create one or if you join the online course here at IELTS Podcast, we help you with a template that you can adapt to the different question types.

But have a template because this is really going to save you a lot of time. So, there are some key kind of expressions, key words that you can use in your introduction, key things that you can use in your conclusion as well as in those topic sentences. There are just some kind of standard expressions that you can use regardless of what the topic is.

Now, just so that I'm not misunderstood, I'm not suggesting using a lot of memorized language in the entire essay. No, but there are some-- trust me. Examiners can pick up on it. They know when an expression or a phrase or like a whole passage is memorized and believe me that's not going to help you, but you can use a template and essentially, what it allows you to do is it allows you to have a skeleton for your writing, a great framework and then what you have to do is essentially just kind of plug in the important pieces of information. Plug in those main ideas. Plug in that support, all right?



And this is a real time saver because you're not struggling with some of those kind of structural sentences and questions. You've got it down. You've learned it and so you can just kind of-- you don't have to struggle with oh, well what word goes best here? No. You've got that structure already. You know it. You've learned it and so you can continue with it and focus on the thing that's important which is topic development and really answering the question fully, as fully as you can.

So, if you've done all this, like I said you still have about 32 minutes more or less; 32, 33 to write your essay and the essay can be written in about 32, 33 minutes if like I said you've done the work. So, you have a template. You've jotted down your ideas, so you're not going to get stuck anywhere and kind of blank out, which is the worst, right?

So, you have your template to help you guide you and give you that structure. You've got your notes on the paper, so you can just kind of plug them into those important places and so then you



have to look at well, where do I want to spend my time actually in my essay? Well, I would not want you to spend more than four minutes on the introduction.

As some of you who may have heard my essay corrections might know, I always say that the introduction has a couple of very important roles, but you don't want to spend too much time on it, all right? So, I essentially suggest no more than about four minutes on your introduction and as I said, if you've got a template down and you've learned it, you won't need more than four minutes because essentially, you've got the major elements. You know them and what you need to include in your introduction and then you just have to change around some of the language so that it's relevant to the task that you have and to the prompt that you have. So, maybe four minutes on this.

The other thing that I wanted to mention is that as I said, you don't want to spend too much time on it. It has a very special purpose. It has some very specific rules and elements it needs to have. So, you have to make sure that you put your position in there. I always say this in my essay



corrections. Whatever the command is in the essay whether it's discuss both views and give your opinion, do not forget to give your opinion.

If they ask you to what extent do you agree or disagree, absolutely include it. While I'd agree that XYZ, I also believe ABC. So, don't forget to put that in there. That's really important. So, address that.

Remember though that the introduction is essentially your opportunity to 1) make a good impression on the examiner. You have to show that you can paraphrase the prompt and you have the language to do that and of course, to express your position. You don't want to go into these lengthy introductions. It's a waste of time. So, use all of that energy and use all that wonderful language in your body paragraphs, but not in your introduction. So, try to be done with it in four minutes.

I would also even say don't spend more than three minutes on your conclusion. The conclusion is essentially a wrap up of whatever you stated in your position. You're essentially just rephrasing



that, saying it once again and then maybe one or two sentences to wrap up and finish with like a thought-provoking idea or some sort of prediction for the future. That's it. So, don't spend precious time on those two elements.

So, if you do that, if you're spending about four minutes on your introduction and about three minutes on your conclusion, that essentially leaves you with a good 10 minutes each for your body paragraphs and I think that's plenty. That's absolutely doable, but again, it also assumes that you've done some of that work preparing and practicing before. So, that's important. That's up to you to have that done.

I know that some people are concerned with the number of words. Now, to the best of my knowledge, there is no official word minimum. There is a suggested word minimum and I do believe that you should aim for over 250 words. I've also said this before. I would even say over 300 words if you're looking for a really well-developed essay, but if you're not sure how much you're writing, make sure that you get a sense of your writing.



So, essentially what I want you to do is I want you to get into the habit of not counting every single word, but making sure that you can get an average word length on your lines. So, read the first couple of lines of your paragraph. Count those and get an average. So, let's say you have 12 words in one line. You've got 10 words in another line. Well, get the average. So, your average words per line are 11.

So, what does that mean? That means that your essay has to be at least 25 lines and that's all you need to do. You don't need to sit there with your pencil like one two three four five six seven eight nine ten. No. Waste of time. So, count the lines. Get your average and then count the lines. So, that's pretty much it for Task 2.

I also should have mentioned that you should try of course to spend-- I didn't mention this-- maybe about four minutes reviewing; correcting any grammar, maybe correcting any spelling mistakes. So, with this kind of time schedule for lack of a better word, you should also have about four minutes to review. And reviewing is important. You might catch some mistakes that



you didn't earlier. I know sometimes I've seen students they're kind of stuck on a word. They can't find it and so they write a word in their own language, in their native language like a placeholder. Well, those four minutes are where you want to correct those placeholder words. Put the right word. Put the correct word in English.

All right. So, let's move on to Task 1. Here again, it's really important to dedicate time to understanding the task. So, look at it really carefully. When does this information take place? Are you going to need to use past tenses, present tenses, future tenses? Highlight the key points in the graph. So, circle them. Where are the highs? Where are the lows? Are there any plateaus? Are there any sort of important things that really should be included? So, spend a couple of minutes again writing those. Just jotting-- not even jotting them, just circling them really on the on the map, on the task.

You may also want to jot down here some vocabulary words. So, things like fluctuation. The figure shows or just little words that help you in case you kind of get stuck at some point. Also,



don't forget that when I say write notes on the booklet, just notes. You're not writing your entire answer there. That would be such a waste of time. So, just some key things that will help you and you've got them there kind of like a handy guide while you're writing.

All right. So, my big tip for Task 1 now is regarding your overview. So, everyone knows that you write your introduction and then there's no real kind of set rule about where your overview should go. Some people write it directly after the introduction and other people write it at the end kind of as a conclusion. Well, here today I'm going to tell you why I think it's absolutely important to write your overview just directly after your introduction.

So, if you follow the other advice that I have given you which is start with Task 2 and make sure that you complete Task 2, you're going to be writing Task 1 obviously at the end of your hour; in the last 20 minutes I am assuming. What you don't want to happen is you don't want to run out of time and not have written your overview.



So, this is why I absolutely say that your overview should come straight after your introduction. If you do that, then there is no way you will miss it because as you probably know by now that without an overview, you cannot get a band 6 for task achievement. You're going to be stuck at best at band 5 for task achievement and that would be a terrible shame. So, the takeaway here is introduction then overview. Really, really important.

And if you do it this way and you still find that you're running out of time, well then the only thing that will be missing so to speak from your essay is maybe some of those less important details that come at the end because remember that when you're structuring your Task 1, you're starting talking about those big details, the major details and then as you progress in your answer, you're getting down to some of those less important details.

So, I hope that this information is helpful. I hope this gives you guys awesome ideas about how to plan, how to use your time, and maybe give it a shot. Maybe if you have found that you're not writing both of your tasks in an hour, try it this way and see what happens, but again, it's going to



need some practice. You're going to need to get down a nice template because that will really help you and you're also going to need to kind of shift around how you do your planning and how you write your essays; what order you write your essays in.

So, I want to wish everybody the best of luck both with your preparation and with your IELTS exams. Remember that we're here to help you. The whole team at ieltspodcast.com is here to help you with lessons, with podcasts, with live videos on Facebook, the online course which gives you tons of information. It's absolutely comprehensive and will help you in all areas of the exam. So, come visit the site. Check out how we can help you to improve and to prepare for IELTS. That's what we're here for. So, best of luck to everybody. Thanks again. Bye-bye.

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